

## IMMACULATE CONCEPTION CHURCH

The Catholic Church had been growing up on Satyrs Hill since 1844 when the first building, a tiny wooden frame structure, was erected. Prior to that time mass had been celebrated in the old town hall above Shealey's store.

There are many church buildings that surround the church itself and these include school buildings, a rectory, a convent and residences for the staff. Most of these are pre-1930 structures and many are 19th century buildings. The church itself occupies the highest point of the hill and is a genuine gothic structure which was finished in 1904. The building is large and is one of the most architecturally complex structures in Towson. It is constructed of native marble and brownstone and is designed in the French Gothic mode thus featuring such typical elements as pointed arch windows, a rose window in the west facade, a clerestory and buttresses. The interior was nearly stripped in a 1960's renovation, however, some fabric remains from the original interior which was very ornate and quite elegant. Chief among the survivor is the pressed metal ceiling and wall covering which adds to the French flavour of the building via its fleur de lis motif. Ribbed vaulting and busses remain and in a few places one can find remnants of the beautiful marble floors and wainscot. This marble is said to have come out of the old Baltimore Exchange building designed by Latrobe and Godefroy c. 1816.

### Immaculate Conception Church--- North Chapel

The north chapel of Immaculate Conception Church remains the most unaltered portion of the interior. It contains the most unaltered fabric, including marble wainscotting and flooring. The wainscotting is approximately four feet high and consists of 8" white squares joined by 3" black squares that form a diamond pattern on both the floor and walls. A marble chair - rail separates the marble wainscotting from the pressed metal which covers the remaining wall space as well as the ceiling. The pressed metal features tiny embossed squares on the spandrels, while the walls display medallions and fleur de lis encircled with gothic tracery. The spandrel ribs end in pedaments that contain egg and dart molding. The ribs , window and door trim has been painted to simulate gilding and portions of the metal trim suggest copper plating.

On the east wall remains the outline of an alter which was situated between two windows, which exist within a gothic shaped niche. At the point where the ribs meet in the ceiling remains a figure, gilded, possibly a cartouche or rosette of some kind. In one portion of the wainscott there is an inset panel made of red and black marble.

## MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

BA - 207

MAG1-0302074708

## INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Immaculate Conception Church

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Joppa Road

CITY, TOWN

Towson

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Maryland

COUNTY

**3 CLASSIFICATION****CATEGORY**

☐ DISTRICT  
☒ BUILDING(S)  
☐ STRUCTURE  
☐ SITE  
☐ OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

☐ PUBLIC  
☒ PRIVATE  
☐ BOTH

**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

☐ IN PROCESS  
☐ BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

☒ OCCUPIED  
☐ UNOCCUPIED  
☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

**ACCESSIBLE**

☐ YES: RESTRICTED  
☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED  
☐ NO

**PRESENT USE**

☐ AGRICULTURE ☐ MUSEUM  
☐ COMMERCIAL ☐ PARK  
☐ EDUCATIONAL ☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE  
☐ ENTERTAINMENT ☒ RELIGIOUS  
☐ GOVERNMENT ☐ SCIENTIFIC  
☐ INDUSTRIAL ☐ TRANSPORTATION  
☐ MILITARY ☐ OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Archibishop of Baltimore

Telephone #:

STREET &amp; NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE.

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. New Courts Building

STREET &amp; NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Towson

STATE

Maryland

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

☐ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

**7 DESCRIPTION**

3A-207

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		DATE <u>Summer, 1978</u>

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

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In 1963 the Church of the Immaculate underwent a renovation that was the result of both necessary maintenance and a change in Catholic doctrine. As a result a good deal of the interior fabric was removed such as the marble altar and the pews and the green, white and gold color scheme changed to gray. The stained glass with lead frames were replaced with modern glass that is predominantly blue and in many cases the windows were sealed up altogether resulting in a much darker and cooler atmosphere. Overall it may be said that the church was reduced in its ornateness in an effort to make it more structurally sound and to give it a more modern appearance.

On the exterior besides the alterations to the fenestration the most noticeable change in the appearance of the building was the addition of the spire just East of the center of the ridge. Prior to the alteration the primary decoration to the roof was the Christian monogram "IHS" worked into the pattern of the slate roof. The initials were made of colored slates and could be read far below on either side of the Joppe ridge.

The history of this church has been printed in several places at different times. What appears to be the most accurate description is found in the Souvenir Journal and Sketch of the Church of the Immaculate (Towson, 1903) and "History of Immaculate Conception Church, Towson" (post 1947) both of which are to be found among many other items in the church archives. Copies of each are attached.

From these records one learns that the complex of buildings which comprises the Immaculate evolved over a period of many years beginning in the late 19th century. The first church was a small frame building at 108 Ware Ave. that was erected in 1884. That church was known as "St. Francis" and served a fast growing parish at least until 1897 when construction of the present church began under the direction of Father Mathew O'Keefe. There is record of the fact that the present sacristy was finished almost seven years before the main church and that Father O'Keefe occupied the upper level as his residence. There is reason to believe that mass may have been celebrated below prior to the dedication of the main church, but no proof.

According to church records there was no architect other than Father O'Keefe who saw to the buildings evolution based on his acquaintance with St. Mary's in Norfolk, Virginia. It is said that the priest collected materials on the site for years prior to completion and that these materials were both donated and salvage stuff from other buildings such as the famous Baltimore Exchange.

A lack of an architect and the use of locally scavenged materials in no way detracts from the architectural quality of this church and oddly enough it was only through a planned renovation that the Immaculate has recently lost much of its character. It remains one of if not the most architecturally complex buildings in the area.

The Immaculate is a direct descendent of the European Gothic Churches of the 12th and 13th centuries and can be seen as French in particular.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1897

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Catholic Church had been growing up on Satyrs Hill since 1884 when the first building, a tiny wooden frame structure was erected. Prior to that time mass had been celebrated in the old town hall above Shealey's store.

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CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY \_\_\_\_\_

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

See Attachment

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE COUNTY

STATE COUNTY

**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME / TITLE

WAYNE E. NIELD  
HISTORIC TOWSON, INC.

ORGANIZATION

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust  
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
(301) 267-1438

While there is no strict formula for recognizing such a structure such elements as rib-vaults, clerestory windows and buttressed walls are peculiar to the Gothic as is the pointed arch which is repeated constantly in the fenestration, doorways, vaulting and in decorative motifs. Likewise the French fleur-de-lis may be seen in the pattern of the metal walls and at the base of the crucifixes which adorn the west facade. While the plan is less than complete it nevertheless is representative of a basilican plan containing a nave with side aisles, the original side altars suggest a transept as does the polygonal bay behind the altar and ambulatory. Both a blind and functional clerestory rise above the nave. The grant rose window which occupies nearly all of the second story of the west facade is yet another Gothic element. The gargoyled spire is a part of the 1960's renovation which adds a great deal to the medieval flavor of the building.

The symbolic qualities of this church are like any "house of God" but there are additional meanings which are strongly hinted at in Souvenir... That this pristine marble construction sits upon the areas highest hill is more than coincidental with its role of being a monument to the Virgin Mary, the mother of God, pure in mind and body, and subject of the "Immaculate Conception." The pamphlet in fact refers to what has always been called Satyr's Ridge as "Monte Maria." Prior to modern highrise construction the Immaculate was Towson's most prominent building and it needed no spire.

The church is oriented longitudinally on the traditional West to East axis with the west facade being the main or entrance side. It consists of a 2½ story gable-ended main block flanked by 1½ story shed roofed wings. From the corners of each wing project polygonal turrets of the same height as the wing (Westwork appearance). Like the other facades, the west is characterized by an arrangement of seemingly contrasting materials. The smooth evenly cut and coursed marble blocks are set off by the dark and rough brownstone trim of the windows and doors as well as the darkness of the slate roof.

The central bay of the west facade is defined by two 2½ story angle-buttresses placed at the corners of the main block. An entrance projects off of this bay and is covered with a sharply pitched gable capped with a combination fleur-de-lis and crucifix. This motif repeats that of the main gable above. The roof of the entrance is flanked by two small "Blind" gothic windows. The clerestory level is defined by a pair of triplet arched windows (6 in all) made blind by alterations. The west facade is dominated by the huge circle of the rose window which occupies most of the upper half of the facade. The circular frame is accomplished via keystones. The circle is framed by a square of brownstones laid in a dentil-like pattern. The facade ends on a sharply pointed gable which repeats the cross and fleur-de-lis of the entrance below. The gable is vented by a triad of windows which has the center window being the tallest of the three.

The large gothic arched central entrance with its wooden tracery above the door is repeated on a smaller scale by the entrance doors of the side wings. Above these are pairs of clerestory windows filled with colored glass.

The exterior sides of the church are quite similar except for the differences between the projecting vestry and sacristy. Each has a polygonal (6 exterior sides) tower or spire on the west end which is crowned with a conical cap. The side aisles project from the main block and are covered by a shed roofed wing. The roof is the same slate as the main block and the walls are made of the same marble. They are reinforced by angle buttresses made decorative by alternating brownstones with marble. The effect is distinctive and not unlike that achieved in Islamic arches with alternately colored voussoirs. Like the main roof the eaves of the wings are bracketed with dentils.

Secondary stone buttresses rise from within and exit the aisle roof to help support the clerestory wall. The highest clerestory is functional and the windows are filled with colored glass. They are wide and somewhat squatty when compared with the other windows. Their brownstone arches have white (marble?) keys.

The sides of the building run nine straight bays in length with the building ending on the East in a five sided polygon.

The difference between the two sides is in the appendages of the east corners. The northeast corner contains a one story vestry which is nearly square and contains pairs of gothic arched windows in its east and north walls. The roof is hipped, covered with slate and finished with brackets.

The southeast corner concludes in a somewhat more involved manner. The sacristy is nearly a separate building and it adjoins the church on the south-east corner and projects to the South. It is two bays wide and three deep and stands the equivalent of one and one-half stories high. The building is capped with a large gable-end roof which has two large gabled dormers on each side. These dormers have gothic windows in carved wooden frames. The walls are of the same construction as the church.

Exterior decoration of the sacristy includes curvilinear bracketed eaves, vergeboard running the entire length of the eaves (holes and lines suggesting a very plain American Gothic) and a fishscale pattern worked into several of the mid-courses of the slate roof. These features suggest the Queen Anne style.

In the center of the south gable is a gray stone which reads "A.D. 1897" The sacristy was the first construction and the rest of the church followed in stages over the next six or seven years.

There is a projecting entrance on the south side and it repeats the motif of the south gable by containing a block at the apex of the gable which is in fact a pedestal for a celtic cross of carved stone.



## TITLE SEARCH FOR IMMACULATE PROPERTIES

(Church accumulated many parcels over a period of time. Tax map is not specific in locations)

Liber 1442, Folio 302 March 13, 1946

Grantor: Frank W. Proctor & wife

Grantee: Archbishop of Baltimore

Two parcels 1) .82 acres (reciprocal)

2) .42 acres Liber 1420/79 December 7, 1945

Grantor: Eliza Ridgely

Grantee: Frank W. Proctor & wife

See Plat Book 6/82, George B. Ensor

Liber 377, Folio 559 May 2, 1911

Grantor: Eliza Ridgely

Grantee: Towson & Cockeysville Electric Railway 66' strip

Judicial Records: Liber 209, Folio 235 November, 1904

John Ridgely of Hampton Vs. Otho E. Ridgely et. al.

See lot # 16 in Ridgely division shown on plat on p. 322

Liber 208, Folio 403 April 27, 1893

Grantor: George E. Reardon & wife

Grantee: Archbishop of Baltimore

Four lots - two lots obtained from Pinkerton Feb. 3, 1893

JWS 179/377

two lots obtained from Valverde A. P. Ware April 17, 1893

96/194


Liber 172, Folio 375 December 18, 1888

Grantor: Henry B. Chew et. al.

Grantee: Rev. James Gibbons

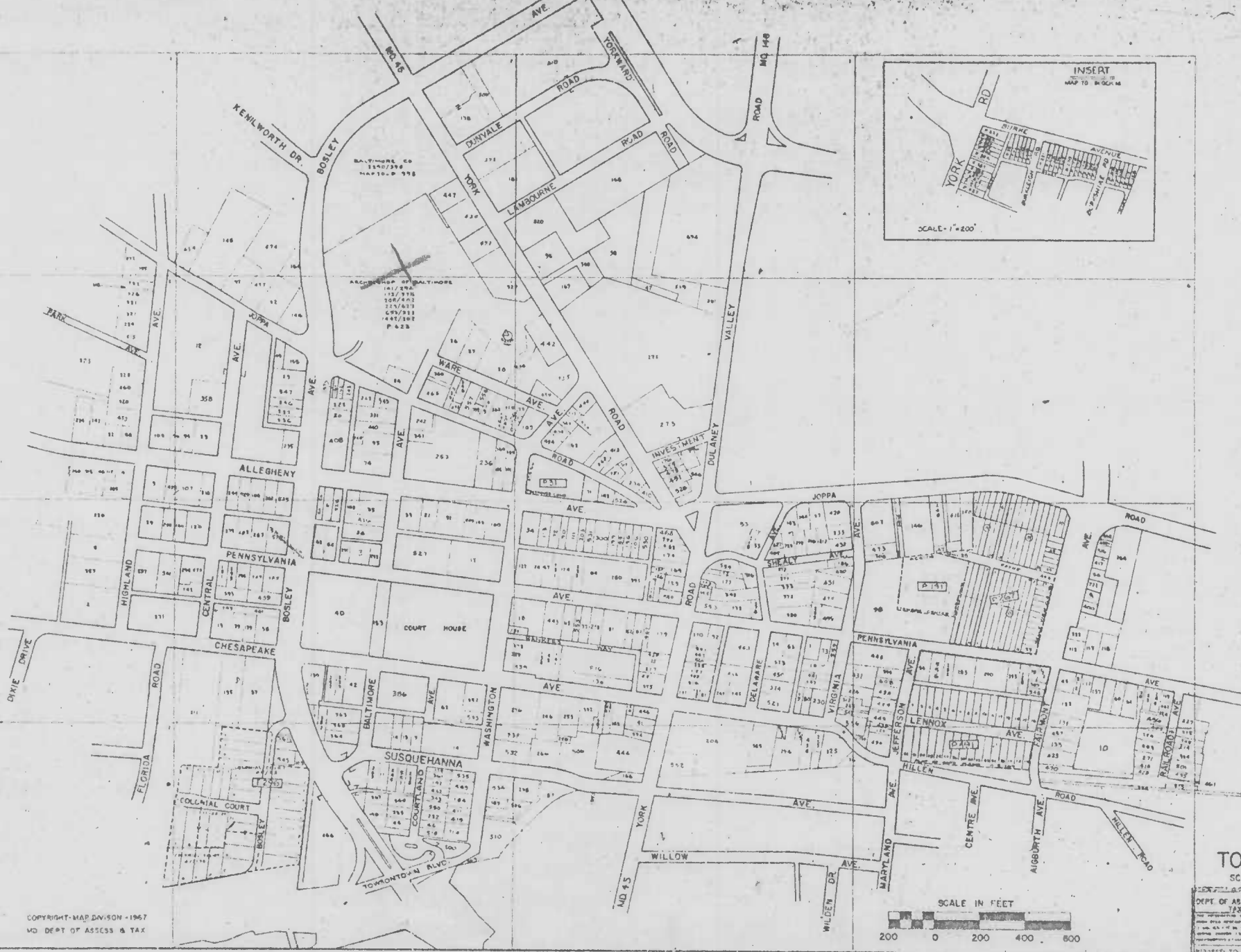
Beginning at...first line of 3rd lot mentioned in division of Charles R. Chew's property (January 18, 1867)...end of 2nd line of tract indentured by Josiah Marsh to Henry B. Chew (January 31, 1834) ...touching west side of York Turnpike...containing 9 acres, 2 rods and 4 square perches.

Being the 3rd lot of land described in Chew partition and part of land mentioned in 19/540 September, 1857

1. STATE Maryland COUNTY Baltimore Co. TOWN VICINITY Dist. IX STREET NO. Joppa Rd. at Bosley  ORIGINAL OWNER ORIGINAL USE church PRESENT OWNER PRESENT USE church WALL CONSTRUCTION stone NO. OF STORIES		HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY INVENTORY BA-208207	
		2. NAME The Catholic Church of The Immaculate Conception DATE OR PERIOD 1887 STYLE ARCHITECT BUILDER	
		3. FOR LIBRARY OF CONGRESS USE	
4. NOTABLE FEATURES, HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE AND DESCRIPTION OPEN TO PUBLIC  Imposing stone structure situated high on a hill. Site acquired by Father Matthew O'Keefe, pastor. After 1900 other buildings were added including the pastor's residence, a convent and school building.			
5. PHYSICAL CONDITION OF STRUCTURE Endangered Interior Exterior			
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;">          6. LOCATION MAP (Plan Optional)       </div> <div style="width: 45%;">         7. PHOTOGRAPH       </div> </div>			
8. PUBLISHED SOURCES (Author, Title, Pages) INTERVIEWS, RECORDS, PHOTOS, ETC.		9. NAME, ADDRESS AND TITLE OF RECORDER Baltimore Co. Hist. Soc. Agriculture Bldg. Texas, Md. (Second HABBS report) DATE OF RECORD March 20, 1968	

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION AND PHOTOGRAPHS MAY BE ADDED ON SHEET OF SAME SIZE

# Immaculate Conception Church



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MD DEPT. OF ASSESS. & TAX



BA-207

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION  
W. FACADE

W. NIELD  
SUM-78



BA-207

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

S.W. CORNER

W. NIELD

SUM-78





BA-207

IMMACULATE CHURCH  
(SACRISTY)  
S.W.

W. NIELD  
SUM-78

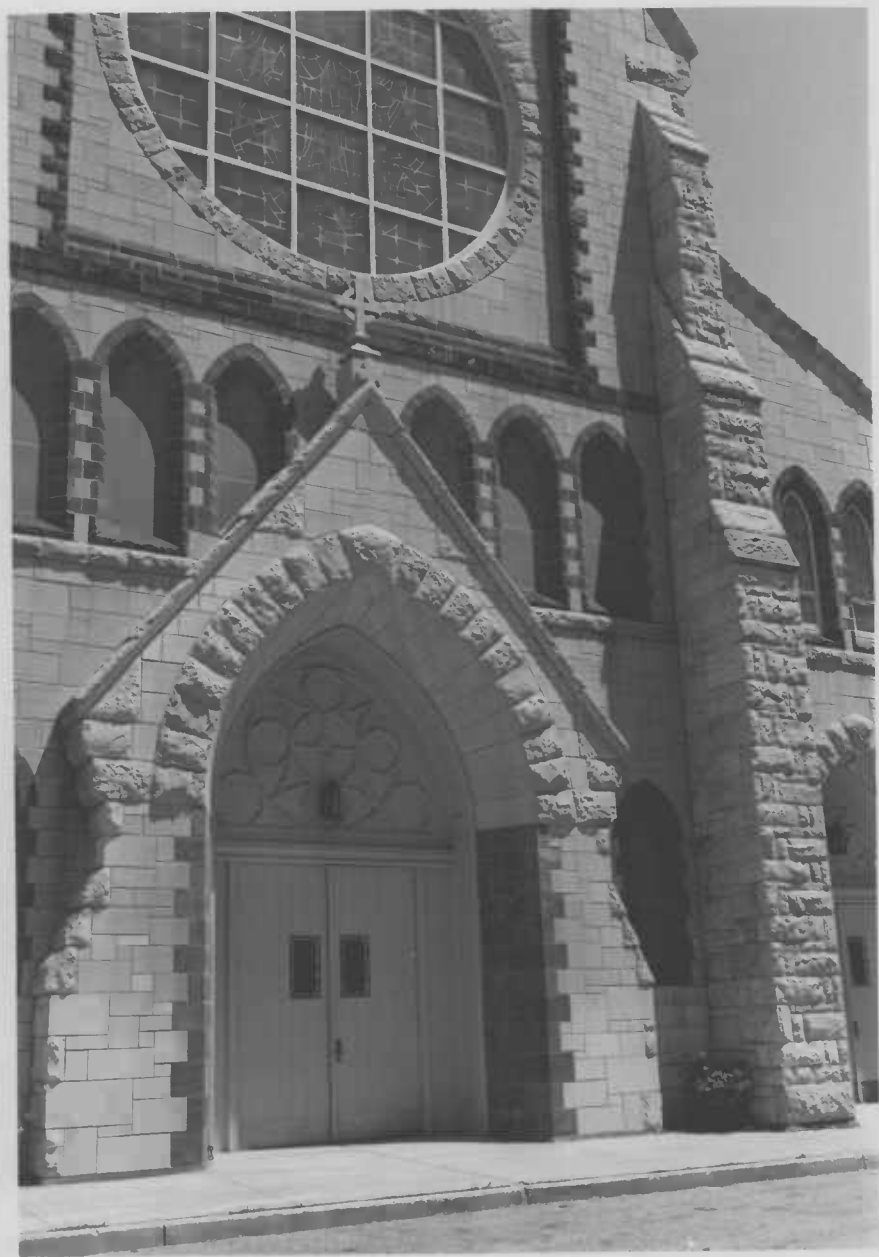


BA-207

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION  
(SACRISTY)

S.E. CORNER

W. NIELD  
SUM-78



BA-207

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION  
(W. ENTRANCE)

W. NIEL D

SUM-78